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MR. FOSTER's
FUNERAL SERMON,

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF

JOSIAH HARTWEEL.

A

SERMON,

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF

JOSIAH HARTWEEL;

WHO WAS DROWNED ON FRIDAY, MAY 20, 1791,
IN THE 15th YEAR OF HIS AGE.

Preached at Littleton the Sabbath following.

BY EDMUND FOSTER, A. M.
PASTOR OF THE CHURCH IN LITTLETON.

He cometh forth like a Flower and is cut down. JOB.

PRINTED AT THE Apollo Press, IN BOSTON,
BY BELKNAP AND HALL.
STATE STREET.
MDCCXCIII.

A

FUNERAL SERMON.

JOB, i. chap. 20, 21, and 22d verſes.

Then Job aroſe, and rent his mantle, and ſhaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worſhipped. And ſaid, naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked ſhall I return thither: The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; bleſſed be the name of the Lord. In all this Job ſinned not, nor charged God fooliſhly.

THE wiſdom and goodneſs of God are ſeen in the trials of his ſaints. Tribulation hath often produced patience and the other graces which accompany ſalvation: and preſent afflictions work out for the patient ſufferers of them, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. God has ſometimes put his ſaints to trial, not only to exerciſe their graces and fit them for his future kingdom; but alſo to make them illuſtrious examples of goodneſs to others.

The lives of the patriarchs and prophets have had a powerful influence upon ſaints and chriſtians, who have lived ſince their day.

By faith and obedience Abraham was accepted of God, and alſo ſtyled the father of all the faithful. The righteouſneſs of Noah, and the meekneſs of Moſes, are recorded for the encouragement of all, who would be meek and juſt. We behold in Job the moſt unremitted patience and profound ſubmiſſion to the will of God, through a ſeries of the greateſt afflictions. The hiſtory of his life and ſufferings will teach us, in what that eminence of character conſiſted, which God gave to him in theſe words: "there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and upright man." Children were multiplied and ſubſtance increaſed to him ſo, that he was the greateſt of all the men of the eaſt. But it pleaſed the Lord to put his ſervant to trial. He brought him down in the moſt ſudden and unexpected manner, from the height of proſperity, to the loweſt depth of adverſity. To the ſpoil of his whole ſubſtance was added the loſs of all his children, by a ſingle ſtroke. The events of this ſingular providence followed each other in the cloſeſt ſucceſſion. The news were hurried upon Job. One ſervant interrupted another, in reciting theſe calamities. At laſt, this meſſage was

abruptly and unexpectedly delivered to him: "Thy ſons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine, in their eldeſt brother's houſe. And, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderneſs, and ſmote the four corners of the houſe, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead! and I only am eſcaped to tell thee." The ruin of Job was now completed. He was without ſubſtance and childleſs. Yet amidſt all this affliction and ſurpriſe he reproached not his maker. But he reſpectfully aroſe, and rent his mantle, and ſhaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worſhipped, and ſaid, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked ſhall I return thither, the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; bleſſed be the name of the Lord. In all this Job ſinned not, nor charged God fooliſhly."

Our method of diſcourſing ſhall be,

I. To conſider the patience and ſubmiſſion of Job, as a pattern to afflicted chriſtians.

II. The reaſons on which he grounded his patience and ſubmiſſion.

III. Apply.

I. We ſhall conſider the patience and ſubmiſſion of Job, as a pattern to afflicted chriſtians.

Not only the language, but the outward behaviour of this memorable Chaldean, in the

inſtance before us, was expreſſive of the inward diſpoſition of his ſoul. His rending his mantle (or upper garment) ſhaving his head, and bowing himſelf to the earth were ſignificant of reverence and ſubmiſſion; and his words, in the text, are expreſſive of the calm and even ſtate of his ſoul, and of its entire ſubjection to the providence of God. How different was the frame and temper of his mind, from that of his impious wife, who, at beholding his ſufferings, adviſed him to curſe God and die! Yea, how oppoſite to that fretful temper of the prophet, who, at the withering of the gourd, which God in mercy had provided for him, thought he did well to be angry even unto death. Thoſe afflictions produced not a murmur in him. He was, for a ſeaſon, dumb with ſilence. Like Aaron the high prieſt of the Jews, who, at ſeeing his two eldeſt ſons inſtantly conſumed by fire from heaven, he ſtood, and held his peace. He quickly proceeded from this ſilence, to explicit adoration and praiſe. He fell down, and worſhipped, and bleſſed God.

The patience and reſignation of Job, ſo commendable in themſelves, will appear to ſtill greater advantage, if we conſider the extraordinary circumſtances, under which he exerciſed them. It is highly commendable to act ſoberly and religiouſly, in circumſtances of ſurpriſe;

and when ſuddenly overwhelmed with ſome great and unexpected calamity. The paſſions are naturally haſty; and, when ſuddenly raiſed to an high pitch, are apt to overturn our reaſon, and hurry us to ſomething raſh and imprudent. They precipitate us into thoſe follies and ſins, which, in our ſober hours, call us to deep humility and repentance. Job is an exception from theſe errors; and an example of piety and prudence to God's afflicted children. His temptations were ſudden. They followed cloſely one upon another, and left him no time for deliberation. Every new event added freſh anguiſh to his heart. At hearing of the death of all his children, and that they were buried in one common ruin, the ſcene muſt have been wrought exceedingly high. It would have been a ſort of pardonable error in Job, (and might almoſt have been looked for in an ordinary ſaint) if when diſtracted by temptations, and ready to burſt with grief, he had at firſt ſpoken unadviſedly, and then corrected and humbled himſelf, as ſoon as reflection had taken hold of him. Yet, in all this diſtreſs, he ſinned not, nor charged God fooliſhly. In his greateſt trial he ſeemed to be entirely himſelf; and during the whole ſcene thereof, his behaviour was ſuch, as could give him no remorſe upon a re-

view. The entire command he had over his own ſpirit, in this difficult hour, ſhews, that his piety and patience, ſubmiſſion and obedience were habitual to him; that he had acquired them by the repeated exerciſes of an holy heart; that by a previous conſtancy in the duties of religion, he became prepared for temptations, and able to ſtand in the evil day. In this view of his character, how worthy of our imitation does he appear? Take, my brethren, this ſervant of God for an example of patient ſuffering. Cultivate the ſame principles and habits. In the day of proſperity arm yourſelves againſt evil; and prepare for the moſt ſudden ſhocks of adverſity. Yield to the divine chaſtiſements, which are tokens of God's love to his children; and are ſent with a particular deſign to make you partakers of his holineſs; that being ſoftened and inſtructed by afflictions, you may ſay, righteous is the hand that correcteth us; bleſſed is the man, whom thou chaſteneſt, O Lord, and teacheſt him out of thy law. Neither tribulation, nor diſtreſs; neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things preſent, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, ſhall be able to ſeparate us from the love of God, which is in Chriſt Jeſus our Lord.

We proceed

II. To conſider the reaſons, on which Job grounded his patience and ſubmiſſion. It was on the conſideration, that all he had loſt had been beſtowed on him by his creator. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, and bleſſed be the name of the Lord. As he had ſublime conceptions of the wiſdom and power of God in creation, he probably ſtretched his thoughts back to the time, when all ſpace was an empty void, unoccupied by any material ſubſtance, or living thing; and conſidered that God, by his ſingle *fiat*, gave exiſtence to all worlds, and to every order of beings; that his own exiſtence, in every view of it, was abſolutely dependent on God; that he was caſt forth naked into this world, without property or poſſeſſion; that the earth on which he ſtood, and the air he freely breathed were the Lord's; that God had given him all his ſubſtance and children, and therefore, had an unqueſtionable right to take them to himſelf again; that to poſſeſs and enjoy them perpetually was contrary to the conſtitution of nature, and order of providence; that if theſe bleſſings had ſtill remained to him, he muſt ſoon be ſeparated from them by death; in which, he muſt leave the world as naked, as he found it. The ſame reaſons ought to enforce patience and ſubmiſſion on every chriſtian,

who, like Job, is ſmitten of God and afflicted. As our own being, ſubſtance and children are bleſſings from God, what is more proper, than to commit them to his keeping; and to refer the time and manner of their diſſolution to him? God's time muſt be the beſt; as all his ways are guided by unerring wiſdom, and founded in perfect righteouſneſs.

Indeed, he ſometimes hides from us the wiſdom and goodneſs of his providence, for the preſent, for an additional trial of our faith and patience; and then he ſupports theſe graces in us, by aſſuring us, that hereafter we ſhall ſee the wiſdom and juſtice of his dealings with men. The ways which are ſtraight and plain to an infinite mind, appear to us winding and intricate; and we are ready to ſay, with unbelieving fretful Iſrael, they are unequal. Becauſe we ſee not their connexion and dependance, and are unable to purſue them through all the depths of futurity, we are tempted to conſider them as partial, and unbecoming their benevolent author. We are ſometimes perplexed and even baffled in our attempts to reconcile the ways of Providence, with our eſtabliſhed conceptions of the divine character.

Who can aſſign the true reaſon, for that native but great diſparity, in beings ſpecifically the ſame? For thoſe advantages, which one poſſeſſes

above another, both in perſonal and mental endowments? Who can ſay, why one dies in infancy, and another full of days? Or why ſome of true excellence and worth, who promiſe a life of uſefulneſs (and whoſe longer continuance in the world ſeemed particularly neceſſary to their relatives and friends) ſhould nevertheleſs, be early given a prey into the cruel hand of death, while the ſimple and profane are permitted to live on ſtill, a trouble to themſelves, and a grief to others? Should we ſay, that the roſe, which opens in faireſt bloom, is uſually the firſt that is plucked off, yet the ſimilitude is not perfectly apt, nor altogether ſuitable to repreſent the divine conduct. For why might not the roſe have been permitted to hang, until it ſhould be perfectly ripe? Or ſhould we ſay, that in theſe ſeemingly untimely deaths, God may take his children from evils to come; that he might foreſee, that future temptations would prevail over them, and corrupt them from the ſimplicity of the chriſtian faith and life. Still, could not that grace, which firſt touched their hearts, and tranſformed them into the divine image, have preſerved them in it? Could not he whoſe eyes are continually upon the righteous, have opened a way for their eſcape from temptations; or have ſupported them when tempted, and ſo have brought them to his heavenly kingdom, at a later period?

Having oppoſed one conjecture to another, we ſhall feel conſtrained, at laſt to ſay unto God, "Thy way is in the ſea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footſteps are not known. It is even ſo father, for ſo it ſeemeth good in thy ſight." It is raſhneſs to cenſure the ways of providence, becauſe they are incomprehenſible. It is impiety to repine at them, when they are afflictive. We ſhould be patient and ſubmiſſive while exerciſed by them, from a belief in God's intrinſic unchangeable goodneſs; from the inſtances, in which he hath manifeſted this goodneſs to us particularly, and from his promiſes of it in future. But theſe conſiderations will fall in more to my preſent deſign, in the application of this diſcourſe; to which I now haſten.

My firſt addreſs ſhall be to the bereaved parents, and their children.

Ye have now heard of the patience of Job, and ye have ſeen the end of the Lord.

Perhaps, your own reflections have almoſt prevented me, in obſerving, that there is ſome reſemblance between his affliction and your's. Job's children were abſent from him, for innocent recreation; they were eating and drinking wine, in their eldeſt brother's houſe; and ſecure, as they believed, from any impending danger, when the wind came from the wilderneſs, and ſlew them.

The meſſage to Job was, they are dead. Have not like ſudden and unexpected tidings reached your ears? Was it not abruptly ſaid to you, of your firſt born ſon, he is dead? With what temper and diſpoſition did you receive the woful news? Did you keep the government of yourſelves, and preſerve your innocence, under the firſt ſhock of this adverſity? Can it be ſaid of you, as of Job, that in all this you ſinned not, nor charged God fooliſhly? Submiſſive, happy ſpirits! Continue in your patience and reſignation; for when ye have been tried, ye ſhall receive the bright crown of immortal glory: and then all your ſorrows ſhall be turned into joy.

But chriſtain patience and ſubmiſſion do not forbid your giving a looſe, to the genuine emotions of an afflicted heart. Jeſus wept; and might again weep, on this occaſion, were he preſent in his human nature. The ſcene is touching, and cannot but excite the tendereſt ſympathy of your ſouls.

May I attempt the language of your hearts, while ſurveying the precious remains of the deceaſed youth? Is this my ſon who ſo lately was alive, and expreſſed to me his affection as a child, in ſo many agreeable and engaging ways? Have thoſe ſprightly eyes loſt all their luſtre? Have thoſe active limbs entirely ceaſed to

move ? Is that youthful tongue ſilenced by death ? Have my hopes in thee periſhed ? Very pleaſant haſt thou been unto me. Thy life was dear to me, like my own ; and would to God I had died for thee, O my ſon, my ſon. O that thou mighteſt have been ſpared a little longer, to have repeated thy piety to God, and thy duty to thy parents : To repay, ſtill further, thoſe cares and labours of nurſing thee in thine infancy, and of inſtructing and forming thy mind to virtue, religion and happineſs. O that thou mighteſt have accompanied thy parents through this troubleſome world. Then thou ſhouldeſt have taken from us many of the burdens of old age, and rendered our latter days more comfortable and happy. But alas, thou art fallen like untimely fruit, and art periſhed. Thy dear remains are ſoon to be removed from this holy place,* to the land where darkneſs and ſilence reign. Now a laſt farewel ! Sleep, ſweet child, till the angel ſhall awake thee, with the laſt trumpet ! Reſt, precious duſt, till the power of God ſhall quicken and reſtore thee to immortality !

That you may patiently and dutifully reſign up this firſt-born ſon, conſider the goodneſs of

* The corpſe was carried into the meeting-houſe, and placed in the broad alley, during the afternoon ſervice, in which this diſcourſe was delivered.

God in beſtowing him upon you, and in making him a hopeful and deſirable child. The ſkilful hand of the Almighty formed his body; and beſtowed the ſpirit, which actuated it. It was his right to deſtroy the clayiſh tabernacle, and to recal the ſpirit to himſelf. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, and bleſſed be the name of the Lord."

That death may aſſume a milder aſpect, and its power appear leſs fatal and terrible, conſider a moment, what it is; that it is not the utter extinction of our being; but only changes the mode and place of our exiſtence. It is a temporary ſeparation of ſoul and body; which, like two friends, that have lived long in a cloſe and intimate connexion together, part with reluctance, though it is expected they will meet, and renew the relation again. In this view of things, we ſay of the deceaſed, as our Saviour once ſaid to thoſe who wept for the ruler's daughter, he is not dead but ſleepeth. In the iſſue of death, the duſt returns to the earth as it was; and the ſpirit returns unto God who gave it. The body ſleeps in the grave, and the ſoul reſts with its redeemer, until the reſtitution of all things. The pious dead are not finally periſhed. The eye of faith looks forward, and beholds them,

in that bright retinue of ſaints and angels, who ſhall accompany the Judge of all, in his viſible deſcent, at the laſt day. We would not have you to be ignorant, concerning them who are aſleep, that ye ſorrow not, even as others, who have no hope. For if we believe that Jeſus died, and roſe again, even ſo them alſo, who ſleep in Jeſus, will God bring with him.

As a further motive to patience and reſignation in the preſent affliction, conſider the goodneſs of God to you, in common with others, in giving his ſon to redeem you and yours from ſin and death. When contemplating this branch of the divine benevolence, you will be ready to ſay, "God ſpared not his only ſon, but freely gave him up for us all, and ſhall I ever become undutiful to him, or unmindful of this unſpeakable gift of his to a ruined helpleſs world? Shall I murmur at reſigning up one of my children, when God calls for him? Eſpecially, if his ſpirit hath been redeemed by the precious blood of the ſon of God, and now reſts in the Saviour's arms, Amen. It is truly well with the child. That death which is loſs, and affliction to us, is gain to him."

And have you not many ſuch hopes concerning the deceaſed, conſidering that his life was, as far as could be expected of ſuch a youth, a life of prayer and chriſtian obedience?

Perhaps, while we are weeping over his cold remains, his ſpirit rejoices in heaven ; it may have juſt entered on the ſervices of that ſabbath of reſt, which remains for the people of God. His voice may now be attuned in full harmony with the heavenly choir, whoſe ſong is, " Now unto him, who hath redeemed us by his blood, be bleſſing and honour, glory and ſtrength, for ever and ever, Amen.

If this be the happy condition of the departed ſpirit, and it could be permitted to addreſs you from the upper world, in a few words, would they not be theſe? " Affectionate parents, weep not for me, but rather weep for yourſelves. I have followed your pious inſtructions ; I have obèyed my redeemer, and am now receiving my reward. I have ſafely paſſed through the dark valley of the ſhadow of death, in which all the living muſt follow me. And I would ſuffer that death a thouſand times, for the joys to which it hath tranſmitted me. My dwelling is now in thoſe manſions, which Chriſt, our forerunner into heaven, hath prepared, for all that love and obey him. I am in that holy and happy ſociety, from which all ſorrow and ſighing have forever fled. Dry up your tears, and turn your attention to the ſurviving children, whoſe feet are ſtill in ſlippery places, and who need the aid

of pious inſtruction, and religious example. Guide them in thoſe ſteps, that have been ſafe to me; that where I am, there you and the children may be alſo."

That you may make the moſt profitable improvement ofthis bereaving providence, be excited hereby, to a diligent preparation for your own diſſolution. For this you live; and to this you are daily urged, by the moſt awakening calls of inſpiration and providence. The luſtre of earthly things muſt now fade in your eyes; and their vanities ariſe clearly to your view. Death muſt appear certain, and eternity all important. God's voice to you now is, ariſe ye, and depart; for this is not your reſt. At a ſeaſon ſo friendly to piety and devotion, form your reſolutions of a future religious life; and never ceaſe to cultivate thoſe graces, which prepare the ſoul for the preſence and enjoyment of its maker.

The members of a religious family muſt feel a peculiar ſympathy and affection for each other; they are deeply intereſted in each other's ſalvation; having been lovely in each other's eyes, while in life, they muſt ſhudder at the thought of being divided at death; and that in the morning of the reſurrection, ſome of them ſhall awake to everlaſting life, and the reſt to everlaſting ſhame and contempt. If theſe are your ſenti-

ments and feelings ; if you all wiſh to obtain the great ſalvation, abound ſtill more and more in labours of love for one another ; ye parents, be vigilant of your children ; be inſtant in prayer for them ; inſtruct their opening minds, and guide their youthful feet in the ways of wiſdom, which are pleaſant, and in the paths of religion, which are full of peace and aſſurance. Children, obey your parents, who like the miniſters of Jeſus, watch for your ſouls ; by a conſtant, cheerful compliance with all their good pleaſure, you will not only comfort them in their preſent affliction ; but you will alſo leſſen their anxieties for you, and raiſe in them hopes and expectations, that your future life will be uſeful, and your end bleſſed. In the death of your brother, who is periſhed like the morning flower, you are taught your own frailty ; and are admoniſhed to live in a daily preparation, for the moſt ſudden and unexpected death ; to this end, remember your Creator while young ; avoid thoſe follies and ſins, which mark the characters of thoughtleſs youth. Sow thy ſeed in the morning, that it may be early ripe for the harveſt. Some of you are old enough to underſtand the nature and end of the holy ſupper ; and to feel your obligations to approach it. Obey Chriſt in his word and ordinances ; that in the beauties

of holineſs, from the womb of the morning, he may have the dew of thy youth; unite with Chriſt's church, in all the offices of his holy religion; place yourſelves where the Saviour meets his diſciples, and commands his bleſſing of life for ever more.

I turn myſelf to the youth in this place. You now behold one, on whom the power of death is paſſed! What a change doth it make in man! What an intereſting event! In it, this mortal ſcene is cloſed, and the curtain drawn, which unfolds eternity to man! Where is now the ſpirit, which lately animated this lump of clay? Is it not gone to God who gave it? Hath it not entered into that reſt, which is typified by the chriſtian ſabbath, and which remains for all the people of the Lord? Ah, ye ſabbath breakers, who profane God's holy day, and pollute his ſanctuary? Conſider your ways; turn from them and be wiſe. Seek the Lord, while he may be found, call upon him while he is near. Accept the divine pardon, offered to you by the Saviour's hand; that you may be ſaved from wrath, and find the loving kindneſs of the Lord.

I ſhall cloſe with a word of addreſs to parents and heads of families.

The providence we now commemorate, calls your attention to your children and domeſtics.

It ſhews you, that in every moment of their lives, they ſtand expoſed to the ſtroke of death; and that their preparation for this awful event depends, in ſome meaſure, upon you. From Job, you learn the affection and duty of a parent for his children. When his ſons and daughters were abſent from him, and beyond the reach of his warning voice, he bore them on his heart to the throne of grace; he offered ſacrifice for every one of them, ſaying, peradventure, they have ſinned. Like him, ſhould we daily commit our children to the divine care; beſeeching God to keep them from evil; or to be nigh them in the article of death, to receive them into the arms of his everlaſting mercy and love. As religion brings down the divine bleſſings on us and ours; as it commends us all to God, let us cultivate and improve it in our hearts, by all the methods of his providence and grace.

And having cloſed the ſolemnities of religious worſhip in this place! and performed the laſt ſepulture, at the grave of the deceaſed, may we return to our families, and ſeverally renew our reſolutions and offices of religion, in the words of pious Joſhua, that "as for me and my houſe, we will ſerve the Lord."

AMEN.